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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: PRT TEAM LEADERS CONFERENCE: MANAGING
RELATIONSHIPS AND CHANGE

REF: BAGHDAD 00386

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Embassy Baghdad's Office of Provincial Affairs (OPA) held its quarterly Team Leaders Conference of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) at Forward Operating Base (FOB) Adder, home to the Dhi Qar PRT. Embassy, NEA, and military officials briefed Team Leaders on plans for the changing PRT footprint in light of U.S. troop withdrawals and decreased funding, emphasizing the change in emphasis from infrastructure restoration to capacity building. Participants discussed forging civilian-military teams and the best use of local Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) in PRT operations. National elections will be a focus of PRT activity over the next several months, and the Embassy will look to PRTs for reporting and analysis. In breakout groups and question and answer sessions, OPA and Team Leaders discussed strategic priorities and transition issues in the context of building Iraqi capacity in critical areas such as water, agriculture, land reform, and the economy. END SUMMARY.

FRAMING THE CHALLENGE: IMPLEMENTING U.S. GOALS IN A NEW ENVIRONMENT

¶2. (SBU) Minister Counselor for Political-Military Affairs, Ambassador Cameron Munter, addressed partnering with the U.S. military. The 2010 Joint Campaign Plan (JCP) between the Department of State and the Department of Defense outlines how the Military and the Embassy will set goals and measure achievements. Unlike the previous plan, however, the JCP contains timelines: August 2010 when U.S. forces reduce from 130,000 to 50,000, and December 2011, when all U.S. combat forces are scheduled to leave Iraq. Another implementation strategy lists the military's non-security functions, and then determines which roles civilians (including the UN and NGOs) can play, and which functions can be eliminated. This last "handover" will help determine OPA's resource allocation post-August 2010 and post-December 2011.

¶3. (SBU) Minister Counselor for Political Affairs, Ambassador Gary Grappo, reviewed the U.S. vision for Iraq, including Iraq's evolving relations with its neighbors. He identified the following as the five greatest internal challenges facing Iraq: sectarianism; political development; economic capacity building, services, health, and education; balance of power between branches of government; and Arab-Kurd tensions. On elections, Ambassador Grappo explained the importance of the passage of an elections law but noted that political deal making and coalition building would happen after the elections. He urged PRTs to develop provincial strategy papers based on the Mission's election strategy plan, and to continue reporting from their unique vantage points.

¶4. (SBU) NEA's Chris Wells presented the Washington perspective on the civilian presence in the provinces. Accompanying the military drawdown, ePRTs will close by Aug

31, 2010. By May 2011 the Department of State will take over operation of the enduring sites and eliminate several more PRTs. Washington's long-term goal is two consulates and a few Provincial Diplomatic Teams (final numbers and locations to be determined).

¶5. (SBU) The Director for Assistance Coordination at Embassy Baghdad, Russ Schiebel, outlined the Mission's transition goals. In the face of a shrinking budget allocation for Iraq, he emphasized that the PRTs' should focus on governance, rule of law, capacity building, and economics. The objective is to develop Iraq's self-reliance.

EYES ON THE PRIZE: NATIONAL ELECTIONS

¶6. (SBU) A session on the national elections scheduled for Q6. (SBU) A session on the national elections scheduled for January 2010 highlighted the Mission's focus on supporting a credible and Iraqi-led process. PRTs must identify media outlets, assist in voter education programs, and report. Although the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) wants international observers at the election, no countries have yet committed to providing them. LTG Charles Jacoby, Commander Multi-National Corps-Iraq (MNC-I) pledged military support in election efforts, noting that this support is contingent upon a request from IHEC.

¶7. (U) According to USAID's Deputy Director of the Democracy and Governance, USAID will provide training, database development, information technology programming, supplies and equipment, and ballot development for the election as part of

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its ongoing electoral assistance program.

THE VIEW FROM MULTI-NATIONAL CORPS-IRAQ

¶8. (SBU) LTG Jacoby identified four potential game-changers: Unsuccessful Sunni reconciliation, Shi'a opportunism, GoI democratic failings, and Arab-Kurd tensions. PRT efforts, meanwhile, in governance, rule of law, and economic development can reinforce stability. Reflecting on the transition of U.S. Forces out of Iraq's cities on June 30, General Jacoby called this shift "a tactical challenge, but a strategic imperative," one that has made the partnership between U.S. and Iraqi Security Forces stronger. This relationship is based on Iraqi sovereignty and the legitimate desire to partner with U.S. forces. Looking ahead, General Jacoby cited national elections, the reduction of U.S. Forces, and the transition from MNF-I to US Forces-Iraq (USF-I) as decisive points over the coming months.

WORKING WITH IRAQ ON ITS PRIORITIES

¶9. (SBU) Acknowledging that U.S. efforts must dovetail with Iraqi priorities, Team Leaders urged the Embassy to encourage the central government to pass national laws and define national strategies for water, agriculture, land reform, and economic investment. Only after the GOI defines macro-level policy can real progress occur at the provincial, let alone district, level. As one Team Leader explained, "Training in economic activity is useless if there is no national Iraqi economic policy to encourage or even allow local entrepreneurship...and more advanced activities like foreign investment will never come without sound policies."

CIVILIAN-MILITARY COOPERATION

¶10. (U) Civilian and military participants agreed that a key to PRT success is cooperation between the Team Leader and Brigade Combat Team (BCT) Commanding Officer. The Team Leader and Deputy Team Leader of PRT Diwaniyah presented best practices from their collaboration, emphasizing that personal relationships set the tone. Many Team Leaders urged that PRT members attend brigade meetings to foster cooperation, as well as host social functions to build esprit de corps. The third piece of the PRT is the Military Support Element, and participants emphasized the need to ensure these members are invested in the process.

¶11. (U) The Diwaniyah Deputy Team Leader noted that for the military to put into practice the civilian-led effort, the Commander's Intent must make clear that the PRT has the reins in economics and governance issues. Military commanders need to see that the PRT and BCT can work together. As one Team Leader put it, the question BCT Commanders should be asking is not "What can the PRT do to help the military win the war?" but rather, "What can the military do to help the PRT win the peace?"

¶12. (U) Many conference participants cited the need to coordinate PRT and BCT efforts on civil capacity projects. Where possible, teams link QRF and CERP projects to achieve a goal, such as using CERP for construction and then QRF to stock it with computers and train staff. Some PRTs have a regular Project Working Group comprised of individuals representing the PRT, Brigade, and local actors such as directors general or district level council members. Several participants cited the satellite PRT concept, where a civilian embeds with a military battalion in a Qada (district) outside of the provincial capital.

SUSTAINING EFFORTS THROUGH LOCAL STAFF

¶13. (SBU) OPA encouraged PRTs to recruit local Subject Q13. (SBU) OPA encouraged PRTs to recruit local Subject Matters Experts (SMEs) in order to create a lasting presence in the provinces. Advantages of hiring SMEs include low cost, quick personnel actions, and their ability to move freely around cities and towns. In addition, bringing them on board will give the teams the much-needed institutional memory and continuity of effort that will be essential when the PRTs are downsizing.

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WHAT WE WANT: OPA'S TO-DO LIST

¶14. (SBU) Team Leaders' primary concern was policy guidance from the Embassy. OPA is creating a lessons-learned initiative and working to preserve institutional knowledge through a classified Intellipedia site.

¶15. (SBU) Other requests and notable areas of concern:

- * Lack of coordination among PRTs. OPA should facilitate communications.
- * Help and guidance on how to encourage local elections. Some recommended a two-pronged strategy with the Embassy pressing the idea with the GoI in Baghdad and PRTs talking with local leaders.
- * Embassy does not put out adequate information in Arabic. PRTs want more material translated, such as speeches by President Obama and statements by Ambassador Hill.
- * In some provinces, USAID representatives do not share information or cooperate on projects and funding.
- * In order to present a more "civilian" appearance to local interlocutors, where security permits, PRTs would like to travel in non-tactical vehicles. OPA allowed that PRTs can make such moves with the concurrence of BCT commanders and RSO.

*Team Leaders want details on the staffing and base location plan through 2011 as the U.S. Military draws down in Iraq.

*As the number of PRTs shrinks and SMEs play an increasing role, the Embassy should budget for more SMEs along with computers, cell phones, and other supplies for each.

*Some form of interoffice mail (perhaps through RSO Air) would improve efficiency. PRTs have to make special trips to Baghdad to retrieve team members' passports or deliver/drop off program money.

OTHER CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

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¶16. (SBU) Other sessions focused on the military's mission change from counterinsurgency (COIN) to security force assistance (SFA) and civil support operations (CSO), working groups of regional blocs, and a tour of a training facility developed by PRT Dhi Qar that provides a venue for international trainers to train Iraqis in everything from health care to cheese-making. Training facility staff also hosted participating Team Leaders for a lunch that featured governors and provincial council representatives from the provinces of Dhi Qar, Muthanna and Maysan.
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